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## **FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF CENTRAL INDIANA RECOGNIZES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH**

INDIANAPOLIS – Each October, the nation honors those affected by domestic violence. The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) stands with survivors to ensure their livelihood and security by enforcing their rights to safe, equitable housing. Too often, individuals fleeing abusive situations experience a second victimization of being evicted or denied housing because of a history of calls to police or property damage caused by an abuser.

“Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness nationwide,” said Amy Nelson, Executive Director of the FHCCI. “It is vital that all survivors know they have a right to fair housing.”

Because women are overwhelmingly the victims of domestic violence, evicting a tenant solely due to a police call in an abusive situation may amount to gender discrimination under fair housing laws. A violation may also occur if a landlord or housing authority denies an applicant simply because the person was once a victim of domestic violence. Tenants have a right to pursue their fair housing options if they are evicted after asking their landlord to help enforce a protection order or are told their housing voucher may be rescinded because of an abuser’s threats of violence.

In Indiana, state laws also ensure that individuals experiencing violence do not have to choose between living with an abuser and living on the streets. A landlord has a legal obligation to change the locks on a tenant’s home within 48 hours of a written request when that tenant has an order of protection or no contact order. If an accredited abuse support program recommends that a victim move to a new location, he or she may terminate the lease with 30 days written notice to the landlord or management, along with a copy of the order of protection or no contact order. The tenant is then legally entitled to the return of the deposit and cannot be charged fees or penalties that would otherwise apply to early termination.

“Housing providers have an obligation to know the laws of the industry they practice,” continued Nelson. “This may mean reevaluating ‘zero tolerance’ eviction policies for violence when a tenant is the victim of abuse, or bringing a court claim against an abuser for damage caused a unit, rather than charging the tenant. The lingering belief that domestic violence is a private matter denies survivors one of their most basic human rights: housing.”

The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) is a private, non-profit fair housing organization. Its mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities by eliminating housing discrimination through advocacy, enforcement, education and outreach. For more information on fair housing or enforcing fair housing rights as a victim of violence, contact the FHCCI or visit [www.fhcci.org](http://www.fhcci.org). If you have questions about domestic violence or suspect someone may be a victim, please contact the Indiana Coalition against Domestic Violence at 1-800-332-7385.

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